

Hi All,

I wanted to thank you again for the opportunity to testify on the bill today.

Unfortunately, by the time I testified, I do not believe Mr. Geiger's written testimony was available on your website. I didn't see it when I checked yesterday or earlier this morning.

I do not know how seriously any of his proposed amendments are being taken but I wanted to express my grave concern with several provisions:

1-I do not think AOFBs should be limited to only one type of zone/district. There might only be 2 farms in a town that want to do one and they could be in different zones. What difference does it make if it's in a 10 acre residential zone or a 25 acre residential zone---the idea is that on-farm AOFBs are promoted and they should be promoted where the farms are;

2-I don't think the state should be setting requirements on how much of a proposed venture's floor space should be devoted to anything--that's yet another example of state micromanagement with arbitrary requirements for a myriad of different types of businesses without any real understanding of the variety of ways all those different AOFBs might be set up or operated--the little details of a project's layout and scale can be addressed locally; I should note that this proposed change seems to be aimed at eliminating most potential AOFBs entirely without saying so.

3-I continue to believe that square footage and other building restrictions are also arbitrary and one-size fits all, and better addressed through local permitting in the actual context of the proposed development

4-I do not understand how the word "predominantly" would modify "feature" which already means "has a prominent attribute" -- prominent already covers it. This change is fluff and will cause more confusion than clarity.

5-I would have spent far more time in my testimony talking about restaurants and their role in supporting Italian farms had I known there was an amendment proposing to nix on-farm restaurants as AOFBs altogether. There is a tremendous misconception about the amount of farming you need to satisfy AOFB requirements as a restaurant. They are part of the solution for maintaining Vermont agriculture--you just need to set up better regulations to guarantee that they become the type of "shared infrastructure" for area farmers that Chris talked about today in the committee. I have no strong feelings about wedding venues as it is very difficult for me to imagine how a wedding can really promote Vermont ag during that type of a ceremony, but I cannot imagine a better way to get people to realize the value of fresh, local ag moreso than having them eat the food on the farm. Italy has forty years relying on these restaurants and they are doing a much better job than Vermont in keeping small farms alive. If you are considering adding a provision like this (when there are only 1 or 2 examples out there in the state), I believe you should see how these projects shake out and re-visit it after you have some real world experience with it. I cannot emphasize what a monumental mistake it would be to amend the bill in that way--with absolutely no effort to study the Italian example and consider ways to use the on-farm restaurant to provide price premium markets for area farmers. I guarantee you that the farms supplying Philo Ridge (there's like 10 on their menu online) get

paid a premium for their product there given that the price fix menu this winter is \$94/person. They won't be happy if that market is taken away abruptly. And it definitely should not be.

I continue to believe that AOFBs will only be pursued by very few farms but that they should become hubs for selling area farm product (at premium prices) and that the definition needs to shift from ratios to a specific production level set by AAFM to make sure you are keeping big farms that can promote all area farmers' products. Ratios are impracticable and they disincentivize the "float all boats" benefit of agritourism by discouraging farms from acquiring product from other farms. AOFBs are not for everyone but they certainly can benefit everyone.